

LASCA Leaves



Los Angeles County Department of Arboreta and Botanic Gardens

ARBOR DAY TREE MEANS PRIDE, BEAUTY AT CHINATOWN SCHOOL

In the 15 years that the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum has been giving trees to schools, thousands of campuses in the County have been beautified. Every tree is important, but a few have extraordinary significance because they are planted in areas with little other natural beauty. One of these special trees was the China bell tree given to the Ann Street School this year.

"Is there a possibility of an Arbor Day tree for our school?" Gil Espinosa asked the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum, starting a series of events that led to a double celebration of Arbor Day at the Ann Street School in Chinatown.

The ceremony starring a tree from the Arboretum began with an assembly program by student council members for Mr. Espinosa's second grade class. The student council consists of two members from each class of grades third through sixth.

The children spoke about how "gifts from other holidays come and

go but on Arbor Day the gift of a tree is special, because it will last for years and years." The children sincerely thanked the California Arboretum Foundation for the China bell tree they received.

This second grade class was very attentive as they learned about Arbor Day. This celebration is known only to children who attend schools that observe this renewing holiday.

The students tramped outdoors only long enough to see where the tree would be planted, because it was raining that morning. But seeing its future location caused a stir of excitement among the children as they happily anticipated the pleasure of the actual planting.

The children and faculty gathered around to watch as Mr. Espinosa planted the new tree, an attractive



LuAnn B. Munns

James Townsend (left) and Paul Sandoval are ready to leave with the final truckload of Arbor Day trees destined for the LA School District.

addition to Ann Street School. The campus in a rather bleak industrial area bounded by warehouses and railroads is the only oasis of greenery open to its students, all resident of a housing project across the street.

Some time ago, students in a kindergarten class had planted flower seeds that were now blooming and would soon be planted in front of the China bell tree which is on the outside corner of the schoolgrounds.

The students tried to think of a pet name for the tree. A movie inspired one young man to suggest "Karate Kid." "Well, it's from China," he added.

The student council has taken responsibility for caring for the tree,

and Mr. Espinosa's class pledged their support in helping tend it.

Several high school students, alumni of Ann Street School, stopped to watch the tree planting ceremony. They seemed pleased to see the results of the administration's efforts at making the campus more natural.

Students and faculty greatly appreciated the gift of the tree to beautify their campus. Because the school is in an industrial area, they want to plant trees and flowers that will make it into a place the neighborhood can be proud of.

"The project started in August with new paint to cover graffiti on the walls," said Inez Lui, coordinator of the Arbor Day event.

"Our school looks much nicer now with all the new trees, flowers and planter boxes." The newly constructed planter boxes sit in front of classroom windows with blossoms peeping over windowsills, adding color and cheer both inside and out.

In this school year the Los Angeles City Department of Water and Power has helped with the school beautification program. They donated trees and flowers and sent a representative to plant and maintain trees as an object lesson in plant care for the students.

A second Arbor Day ceremony was held later that day honoring David Osborne, a popular Ann Street School teacher who died last year. A "Sho" tree, donated by the



The student council explains Arbor Day to the Ann Street School assembly.

water district, was dedicated in Mr. Osborne's memory. The tree stands at the center of the campus with a plaque beneath it. He taught for many years at the school and took the children on field trips and nature hikes. Everyone at the school felt that dedicating the tree to him would be a great way to show their appreciation for Mr. Osborne since he had an avid interest in nature.

The Arboretum began the Arbor Day outreach program as another environmental and conservation awareness project offered to the schools. This unique program is supported by the Oak Tree Foundation and the California Arboretum Foundation. In 1987, more than 500 schools received a China bell

tree (*Radermachera sinica*), one of the latest plant introductions from the Arboretum to the Southern California area. Schools also received a supplementary packet with information about Arbor Day, the tree they received and educational materials for teachers to use in classrooms.

Society is well aware of special things that need to be done to conserve and beautify the environment. When a tree is planted it decreases the harshness of an urban atmosphere.

The person who originated the idea of "tree planting day" was J. Sterling Morton, a newspaper publisher in Nebraska. The first Arbor Day in Nebraska was celebrated

April 10, 1872.

A uniform date for all states to observe Arbor Day has not been chosen because of the differences in climate in each state. In California, Arbor Day is celebrated March 7 on the birthday of Luther Burbank. Burbank was a horticulturist known for his work on improving fruits, vegetables, flowers, grasses and trees.

When the California Arboretum Foundation gives a tree for planting on Arbor Day, the tree comes to symbolize not only an appreciation of trees, but an effort toward the conservation of all natural resources to make sure that future generations have a beautiful and productive world.



Ann Street School teacher Gil Espinosa strains to dig a planting hole in the hard-packed earth.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FAIR

Youngsters of all ages find engrossing activities at the seventh annual Environmental Education Fair Mar. 14 at the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum. (Right) A young man operates an electronic display that illustrates the need for water conservation in Southern California. (Below) In the Nature Bowl competition, teams from elementary

schools talk over an answer as they try to beat rival teams to the buzzer. About 50 teams took part in the contest modeled after the popular "College Bowl." In the bottom photograph, Jean Dillingham (in hat) from the National Park Service leads one of a day-long series of non-competitive nature games meant to teach children as they play.



Photos by Jill Lachut

Computers Join the Team



by LuAnn B. Munns

COMPUTERS, best known for their “number crunching” capabilities, are moving into realms of the cultural world usually thought to have values far different from the machine logic of computers. In understanding how the computer revolution affects cultural institutions, it helps to examine the goals and problems of these institutions.

Traditionally, a society expects

cultural institutions to collect and maintain the articles and resources valued by that society. Museums, libraries, botanic gardens and other cultural institutions also strive to enhance the quality of life for their supporters by making collections accessible for study and enjoyment.

All cultural institutions must keep accurate records of their holdings showing not only what they have,

but exactly where each item is located. Without this information, even the most extensive collections lose much of their value because specific items cannot be retrieved for study or display purposes.

Problems encountered in maintaining up-to-date records for collections of non-living objects in museums are magnified when dealing with plants at botanic gardens. Ex-



Coleen Cory, nursery worker, (left) and John Provine, Arboretum superintendent, evaluate growth from seeds received through the seed exchange program. Plants go through several more steps before being planted out.



James Bauml, senior biologist, sorts through seed packets received from China. The Arboretum shares with about 500 other botanical gardens in an exchange program.



Charlette Larson enters data on rare or endangered plants at the Arboretum into a computer in the Director's office. Most botanical research institutions use the same database.

perimental programs and the whims of nature cause a constant turnover among plant collections. The plant introduction program, a paramount reason for the existence of the Los Angeles County Department of Arboreta and Botanic Gardens, adds many new plants each year to the collections at the gardens. The problem of tracking each new acquisition from its arrival as a seed to propagation and on through the nursery until it is finally established in the field can only be solved by keeping extensive records. In the past, all information had to be noted by hand in a system of file cards, one card for each plant.

To manage this expanding accumulation of data, an in-house computer project was started two years ago at the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum. The first step in the project was to enter into a central system a complete listing of the plant collections on the Arboretum grounds. Facts on about 20,000 plants including scientific names, origin and location were taken from the existing card file. Once that was finished, the staff began analyzing the raw information, looking at the strengths of the collections and what needed improvement.

According to James Bauml, senior biologist, computer records show that the Arboretum has an enormous collection of woody plants. "If you include all four gardens of the Department, the overall collection is even more outstanding.

"The main shift with the coming of the computer is the opportunity to deal with the collections of the Department as a whole," he added. "Computers will allow us to create files for each of the gardens and ultimately merge those files."

As leader of the mapping crew at the Arboretum, herbarium curator Suzanne Granger uses the computer

to keep plant records current. Armed with the last printout, she and her crew survey individual 200-foot square quadrats in the garden. Then she compares the record with the actual plants found in the field. Usually many changes must be made in the record for each quadrat.

"Each time we go out, we make the records a little more accurate," Ms. Granger said. For an average quadrat, almost a page of additions and deletions must be made in the computer records. Often the crew finds that plants listed in the printout have vanished, usually because when they died the paperwork noting their demise never reached the files. Other plants were mislabeled by the seed supplier when they arrived, so they were planted out under a misnomer. Until they reach maturity and produce flowers and fruit, the plants cannot be positively identified.

Occasionally the crew locates a "phoenix plant," one that had been reported dead because the card was lost but is actually very much alive. Finding collectible seeds of unusual plants worthy of being offered on the Department's seed exchange list is another unexpected bonus. This constant updating also helps remove plants of dubious parentage from the collections. When the mapping crew finds a "volunteer," a wild-sprouted tree or shrub, they mark it for removal by the tree crew.

A current, corrected printout is kept in the library, accessible to gardeners and scientists who want to locate specific plants on the grounds.

As useful as the information is about what is growing on the grounds, even more vital to future development of the Department are the gaps it reveals in the plant collections. Computer-generated records will help develop guidelines for the Department-wide plant col-

lection policy based on what is now in the collections, what they should contain, and what plants must be propagated, planted out and used for the plant introduction program.

"We are broadening the scope of the collection policy to include not only those things to be grown at the Arboretum," said Mr. Bauml. He emphasized that all the gardens play a part in Department holdings. "Since space is limited at each garden, we must plan ahead to make the right decision on what should be grown at each garden based on the overall goal of meeting the horticultural needs of the community."

Eventually, the plant lists of all the gardens — Descanso Gardens, South Coast Botanic Garden and the Virginia Robinson Gardens as well as those at the Arboretum—will be recorded. This will eliminate duplications among collections as well as help determine which of the four gardens is most appropriate for concentrations of particular plants. South Coast Botanic Garden, for example, will probably be the site for comprehensive plantings of the many forms of rosemary, lavender, sage and datura. Descanso Gardens, on the other hand, will continue to be homebase for camellias and roses.

Soon four IBM Professional Computers will be in operation in addition to the central system.

One computer in the office of John Provine, Arboretum superintendent, will track plant acquisitions from the time the seed first arrives in the nursery. This is important because some exotic plants may take many months to germinate and then remain in the nursery for up to three years before they are large enough to plant outdoors. At any one time the nursery contains up to 30,000 plants besides the permanent collections of stag-horn ferns and houseplant specimens.

Normally, about 2,500 new ac-

cessions will be traveling through the nursery each year, many making their way eventually into the permanent collections on the grounds. Because each plant is being grown experimentally, notations on how it was planted, whether or not it thrived and under what conditions are vital in evaluating its potential for the plant introduction program.

Another IBM computer in the Research Division will manage records of the roughly 10,000 plants in the orchid collection. Many of the orchids are endangered or threatened in the wild, so details on where the plants were gathered will



Suzanne Granger, herbarium curator, marks a wild seedling with spray paint, signalling removal by the tree crew.

be essential to taxonomists and other researchers.

The computer in the office of the director, Francis Ching, will be used for recording rare or endangered plants. Each year the International Union for the Conservation of Nature circulates checklists of rare and endangered plants among the botanical gardens of the world. IUCN Conservation Monitoring Centre at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, lists the current status of these plants and requests information on rare and endangered species growing at each garden. The computer will be invaluable in isolating those plants at Depart-

ment gardens. Most of the major botanical research institutions use the same database employed by the Department, so the staff here can participate in the worldwide endeavor of propagating and sharing endangered species.

A fourth computer at South Coast Botanic Garden will record the status of the plant collections there. The unique growing conditions will make data on plants grown on reclaimed land especially important as more landfills across the nation reach capacity.

Computers will continue to handle many of the routine tasks such as inventory control, bookkeeping and

word processing that support Departmental operations. But, unheralded, they will also play an important part in helping the staff meet the cultural goals of the gardens. The machines' great versatility links the Los Angeles County Department of Arboreta and Botanic Gardens with other such institutions around the world, working to preserve the riches of the plant kingdom.

Article and photos by LuAnn B. Munns, Arboretum publications specialist.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MAY, JUNE, JULY, 1987

LOS ANGELES STATE AND COUNTY ARBORETUM, Arcadia

MAY 2 — 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Preview Party
Baldwin Bonanza

MAY 3 — 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

BALDWIN BONANZA XVII, Benefit Plant Sale
California Arboretum Foundation

MAY 9, 10 — Sat. 12 to 4 p.m.

Sun. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Geranium Show
LA Branch of International Geranium Society

May 17 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Epiphyllum Show
Epiphyllum Society of America

MAY 23, 24, 25 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Bonsai Show
Santa Anita Bonsai Society

MAY 30, 31 — 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Azalea Show
Valley Satsuki Azalea Society

JUNE 6, 7 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Fuchsia Show
National Fuchsia Society

JUNE 13, 14 — Sat. 1 to 4 p.m.

Sun. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Gladiolus Show
Southern California Gladiolus Society

JULY 3, 4, 5 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Cactus and Succulent Show
Cactus and Succulent Society of America

JULY 18 — 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Koi Conference & Luncheon
Additional cover charge
Koi Clubs of America

JULY 25, 26 — Sat. 1 to 4:30 p.m.

Sun. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Begonia Show
SGV Branch of the American Begonia Society

SOUTH COAST BOTANIC GARDEN, Palos Verdes Peninsula

MAY 16, 17 — 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

FIESTA DE FLORES, Benefit Plant Sale

South Coast Botanic Garden Foundation

MAY 24 — 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Epiphyllum Show
South Bay Epiphyllum Society

MAY 30, 31 — Sat. 1 to 5 p.m.

Sun. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Rose Show
South Coast Rose Society

JUNE 6, 7 — Sat. 12 to 4:30 p.m.

Sun. 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Fuchsia Show and Sale
South Coast Branch of the National Fuchsia Society

JUNE 13, 14 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Cactus Show and Sale
South Coast Cactus & Succulent Society

JUNE 21 — 2 p.m.

Talk, "How Does Your Garden Grow?"

Jean Natter

JUNE 28 — 2 p.m.

Slide show "A Gardener's View of South Africa"

Beth & Julius Glogovcson

DESCANSO GARDENS, La Canada Flintridge

MAY 1 thru JUNE 4 — 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Artist of the Month
Valley Watercolor Society members
Descanso Gardens Guild

MAY 1 — 10 to 11:30 a.m.

May Day Celebration
Descanso Gardens Guild

MAY 23, 24 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Chrysanthemum Plant Sale
Glendale Chrysanthemum Society

MAY 24 — 2:30 p.m.

Performing Arts Program
Descanso Gardens Guild

MAY 30 thru JUNE 1 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Bromeliad Show
San Fernando Bromeliad Society

MAY 31 — 2:30 p.m.

Performing Arts Program
Descanso Gardens Guild

JUNE 5 thru JULY 2 —

9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Artist of the Month

Jackie Carty
Descanso Gardens Guild

JUNE 6 — 12 to 5 p.m.

Daylily Show
Southern California Hemerocallis & Amaryllis Society

JUNE 6, 7 — 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Arts and Crafts Faire
Descanso Gardens Guild

JUNE 7 — 2:30 p.m.

Performing Arts Program
Descanso Gardens Guild

JUNE 14 — 2:30 p.m.

Performing Arts Program
Descanso Gardens Guild

JUNE 21 — 2:30 p.m.

Performing Arts Program
Descanso Gardens Guild

JUNE 28 — 2:30 p.m.

Performing Arts Program
Descanso Gardens Guild

JULY 5 — 2:30 p.m.

Performing Arts Program
Descanso Gardens Guild

JULY 12 — 2:30 p.m.

Performing Arts Program
Descanso Gardens Guild

JULY 19 — 2:30 p.m.

Performing Arts Program
Descanso Gardens Guild

JULY 26 — 2:30 p.m.

Performing Arts Program
Descanso Gardens Guild